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DEPT ALSO FOR PRM/A DRL AND EUR; DHS FOR BCIS OFFICE OF ASYLUM, REFUGEES AND INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS; MOSCOW FOR REGIONAL REFUGEE COORDINATOR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/30/2018

TAGS: PREF CVIS KDEM PGOV PHUM GR IZ
SUBJECT: P-1 REFERRAL FOR U.S. RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM: WARDA, JOHNSON HERMIZ WARDA AND SPOUSE

REF: A. 03 STATE 326248

1B. ATHENS 719

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel V. Speckhard for 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Embassy has identified Iraqi citizen Johnson Hermiz Warda as a candidate for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program as a Priority 1 referral. Warda submitted a written request to the Embassy for refugee resettlement to the United States based on his prior employment in Iraq with a contractor of the U.S. government. This request was followed by an interview with an Embassy officer. Warda's situation seems to meet the criteria of both a persecution claim and a ne`ttlement. Warda worke@esearch Triangle Insti003-2007 and was forceQlowing a series of incr%lne calls and letters. Th`d on both his religion d his implied political After arriving in Greece in October 2007, he applied for refugee status, but his claim was denied in November 2007. His temporary residence permit expired on May 16, 2008, and he is now in danger of being returned to Iraq.

BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

12. (C) The following is the biographical information for Warda and his spouse.

Name: WARDA, Johnson Hermiz Warda
Relationship to Principal Applicant: Self
DPOB: 14-Nov-1976, Baghdad, Iraq
Gender: Male
Nationality: Iraqi
Current Address:
Falirou 29A
Ag. Ioannis Renti
Athens, Greece

Name: RAYIS, Eva Ibrahim Yacoub
Relationship to Principal Applicant: Spouse
DPOB: 17-Mar-1981, Baghdad, Iraq
Gender: Female
Nationality: Iraqi
Current Address:
Falirou 29A
Ag. Ioannis Renti
Athens, Greece

REASON FOR REFERRAL/U.S. INTEREST

13. (C) The Embassy became aware of Warda after he contacted the Department of Homeland Security representative at post in June 2008 seeking assistance in accessing the U.S. Refugee

Admissions Program as he had heard that the United States was offering assistance in Egypt and Jordan to Iraqis who had been direct-hire employees of an organization or entity closely associated with the U.S. Mission in Iraq. According to Warda, from October 2003 until September 2007, he worked for Research Triangle Institute (RTI) in Baghdad. RTI was a contractor for USAID working on Local Governance Projects 1 and 2. Warda worked inside the Green Zone and showed an Embassy officer copies of work badges identifying him as a USAID-RTI Contractor. He worked as a driver for a year and a half and then became an operations/security manager, working 24/7 shifts at the compound entrance monitoring the USAID/RTI compound using automated cameras, computers and radios. He also provided escort/transportation services to American staff members as necessary. Many American RTI contractors provided him with letters of reference, citing his commitment to his employment and his eagerness to help his American colleagues. Post contacted all of these contractors to verify this information and received responses lauding the assistance Warda had provided to the American staff while working with RTI. One of the contractors even offered to hire Warda and his spouse if they ever went to the United States.

¶4. (C) In addition to his work with a USAID contractor, Warda's wife also has several cousins and uncles who are U.S. citizens living in Arizona and Michigan.

PERSECUTION CLAIM

¶5. (C) While Warda was not physically harmed before he left Baghdad, he feared that he would be killed. Warda claimed that in June 2007 he received a call on his cellular phone warning him to stop working with the Americans or he would be beheaded. He ignored this phone call, but received a second one on September 5, 2007, reiterating the threat in stronger language. He continued to work since his entire extended family relied on his income for sustenance. However, on September 22, 2007, he received a letter at his home from an organization calling itself the Secret Islamic Military. The letter stated that it was a final warning and that since he was an outsider of Islam working and supporting the occupiers, his blood would be shed unless he immediately stopped working with the Americans (Warda provided post with a copy of this letter). Warda believed that since he was Christian, his death could be justified by the Muslim extremist whom he believed had sent the letter. Fearing for his life, he immediately quit his job and made arrangements to leave Iraq four days later on September 26. He fled with his wife to Istanbul, Turkey and from there crossed the land border to Greece.

NEED FOR RESETTLEMENT

¶6. (C) Upon arrival in Greece, Warda and his wife went to the authorities and applied for refugee status on October 8, 2007. They were detained in jail for nine days before being released with temporary refugee identity documents. They made their way to Athens where his wife had family members. In November 2007, he received a letter from the Greek government stating that his refugee claim had been denied as groundless since he was deemed to be an economic immigrant. He continued to live in Greece with the temporary refugee documents which continued to be extended until May 16, 2008 (the documents were originally valid for 6 months and were then automatically extended for one month when he set up an appointment to inquire about his case). At his appointment on May 16, police officers informed him that he had to leave the country. Warda and his wife claim they have no place to go. His wife's parents and brother live in Athens. However, Greek authorities have also denied their refugee applications, and they are in the appeals process. His own relatives are still in Iraq. (NOTE: The situation for refugees in Greece, especially those from Iraq, is highly criticized. Reftel B describes a report issued in April 2008 by UNHCR in Greece. In this report, UNHCR criticized

Greece's refugee process, especially the low acceptance rate for refugees. Greece has by far the lowest acceptance rate in all of the EU -.04 percent at first instance - usually with only a cursory justification for the denial. In fact, the report stated that of the 5474 Iraqis who applied for refugee status in 2007, none were accepted. END NOTE). Given his illegal status in Greece and his denied refugee petition, Warda and his wife are now in danger of deportation if caught by Greek authorities.

RECOMMENDATION

17. (C) Embassy officer interviewed Warda and his wife and believes their story to be credible, including their fear of persecution. Given the refugee situation in Greece and the information provided in the UNHCR April 2008 report, it is highly unlikely that Warda will be able find another solution in Greece or that his refugee claim will be reexamined. Warda has both a persecution claim and a need for resettlement and therefore the Embassy recommends him as a Priority 1 referral for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

EMBASSY CONTACT INFORMATION

18. (C) For additional information or clarification, please contact the following Embassy officer:

Name: Berenice Mariscal
Section: State/CONS
Phone: 30 210 720 2760
E-mail: mariscalb@state.gov

SPECKHARD